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THIS--1993

Tanya Allen--Editor
Tina Dayhoff--Contributing Editor

WHY THIS?

Well...because.

PRAISE BE....

Praise be to Jim Crawford & Tarin Towers & George Jamison & everyone at Central Services for all their help. Praise be to KT Degentesh for burning THIS. (no, she is not the lit-haus-pyro.) Praise be to Erin Page, Conan Bailey, Jodie Clark, and Erin Rowe for their contributions. Praise be to Christine Smith, Susan Parker, & Ryan Walker for listening to me rant. Praise be to Jodie for watching me twitch. Praise be to Erin R. for being such an un-gooby gal. Praise be to Andy Stone for not killing me when I over-nagged him. Praise be to Thane Glenn, Anthony Hecht, Dave Johnson, Steve Brown, Pat Geissel, Jenn Reddish, Tarin & Tina Dayhoff for that rather long lunch conversation during which the back cover of THIS was born. *Praise be to the Writer's Union and the Visual Artist's Union and the O'Neill Literary House, which generously donated all of the money for THIS mag.* Praise be to Professor Day & Kathy Wagner!!!!! Praise be to *everyone* who contributed to & helped with THIS! & Praise be especially to the graduating Lit Haus crowd...you will be missed. Good luck, all!

--Tanya Allen

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Washington College
Chestertown, Maryland 21620

Front cover by ***JIM CRAWFORD***
"This" --pen & ink

THIS is dedicated to the memory of Ed Schroeder.

--and maybe some misty day you'll waken to find me gone
and far away you'll hear me singing to the dawn
--Pippin

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JUSTIN CANN

HOWL

for Douglass Cater

I

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by tuition hikes,
starving hysterical threadbare,

dragging themselves to the Financial Aid Office looking for a measly
fix,

stuffyheaded students burning for the ancient tuition of the starry '70's,

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in
the supernatural bleakness of Caroline House uncarpeted halls,
floating across the top of the Casey Building contemplating
transfer, leaving the school to those

who burn for date rape, itch with chlamydia,

who, richly attired in J. Crew, shunned everything but their lacrosse
caps to run naked through the halls of Minta Martin,

who pissed on all the doors there, and took craps in the stairs,

who got into a fight at the New Dorms and then got high and even
drunker in Cardinal F,

who ran quacking naked through Middle and got beat up by KAs,

who blew and got blown by brothers, then beat up fags in Georgetown
and fled the scene in daddy's BMW,

who sweetened the snatches of thousands of unwilling chicks at Farm
Parties and got poison ivy on his balls,

who scratched, "Do Bong Hits!", into desktops in Bill Smith,

who ate some mushrooms and ended up in Galena, late for Baby Bio,

incomparably fucked-up, storm clouds obscuring thoughts between
lamp poles of the Cater Walk, illuminating all the stupidity
between,

mushroom solidities of halls, uncarpeted funeral parlor nineteen sixty three dawns, dorm room dens of dirty-sockhead four year joyride, sun and moon and tree plantings in the fizzling rain of Bill Smith Field, mudpuddle rantings and kind knave darkness of mind,

who majored in Business after bewilderment in English, and took over daddy's firm,

who passed out drunk somewhere downtown,

who stole books he didn't even like from Miller library and later used them for toilet paper when he was too lazy to go out and buy some,

who drove all fucked-up to Smiley's and ate four slices of their pizza, then accidentally swallowed his chaw,

who threw up all the next day and missed Victorian Poetry altogether,

who was on AP for four semesters and still graduated,

who's dad donated a building,

who finally got charged with date-rape, but got off because his dad's a big lawyer,

who got pulled over at 93 MPH in an Athletics van, and switched with a teammate who only had <u>one</u> DWI,

who listened to nothing but classic rock,

who sneered at freaks,

who actually read some of the plays in Shakespeare, but refused to like them,

who was engaged to a girl at Frostburg, but slept around on her anyway,

who talked in class, and slept too, though I can't blame them for some, like the one I wrote this poem in,

who voted for George, and thought that Desert Storm was a really nifty idea,

who never doubted that we were right to kill hundreds of thousands of people we didn't even know,

who got drunk at the Birthday Ball and threw up on his fiancées dress, then fucked her,

who wrote a poem once, but won't admit it,

who masturbates, and won't admit that either,

who never attended one extra-curricular event that wasn't a party or sports game,

who slid naked across beer at rugby parties, and passed out feet in the air, head in the trashcan,

who never went into the Lit House, except on his Admissions tour,

who got a tattoo that no one knows about,

who got a 59% on a test and argued it up to a 61%,

who got 69 that night, and something else too,

who got that cured a few months later,

who went to a cast party, got kicked out, and then called all the cast fags,

who climbed the water tower before it was taken down, and painted his frat letters there, pretending he was a part of the superstructure to fool Spike, shuffling by at 3:00 AM,

who's typewriter gathered dust, and who's stack of porno mags didn't,

who danced at the Sacred Cows, beer in hand and cock hanging out his fly,

who grumbles when classes run too long,

who read a book or two while he was here, Tom Clancy, I think,

who got his stomach pumped at Kent County Hospital after drinking two bottles of tequila, because his fiancée broke off the engagement

who tossed and turned in puke besotten sheets and rose his head up to God and said he would never drink again,

to recreate the syntax of drunken slurring, speechless, rejected, wasted rhythm, no thought in his naked head,

spasms and stomach contractions beat time in his body,

and he rose, turned on Rush

with the absolute love of a poem butchered out of his brain, pickled to survive a thousand years.

II

What sphinx of brick and sand mashed together, irritated their eyes and ate up their savings and imagination?

Caterwalk! Multitude! Bricks! Ugliness! Mudpuddles and unobtainable dollars! Students puking on the stairways! Boys nodding in class! Old men weeping in libraries!

Caterwalk! Caterwalk! Nightmare of Caterwalk! Caterwalk the artless! Unmental Caterwalk! Caterwalk the heavy burden of men!

Caterwalk whose mind is pure brick! Caterwalk whose blood is running pure money! Caterwalk whose fingers are five checkbooks and five pens! Caterwalk whose breast is a cannibal brick factory! Caterwalk whose ear is a mouldering tomb!

Caterwalk whose eyes are a thousand blank computer screens in the CAC! Caterwalk whose skyscrapers stand in the long malls like endless statues!

Caterwalk whose love is endless beer and brick! Caterwalk whose soul is alumni and banks! Caterwalk whose poverty is the ghost of genius!

Caterwalk on which I sit lonely! Caterwalk on which I dream Dean's List Students!

They broke their wallets lifting Caterwalk to Heaven! Pavements, trees, computers! lifting the college to a Heaven which could exist and could be everywhere around us!

Visions! hallucinations! ecstasies! gone down the Chester river!

Real holy study in the school! They saw it all! the bleary eyes! they holy drunks! They bade farewell! They transferred off the roof! to multitude! waving! carrying books! Down to another school! into the library!

III

Doug Cater! I am with you in the CAC building

where you can't hear me and I can't hear you
I'm with you in the CAC building

where you must feel right at home
I'm with you in the CAC building

where you imitate the shade of dead alumni
I'm with you in the CAC building

where you laugh at this invisible humor
I'm with you in the CAC building

where we are great writers on the same locked-up computer
I'm with you in the CAC building

where you savor the marble of the mines of Italy
I'm with you in the CAC building

where you scream in the Forum that you can't be heard
I'm with you in the CAC building

where fifty more big buildings will never return your best students to the body again from their pilgrimage to other institutions
I'm with you in the CAC building

where there should have been more classrooms so that we wouldn't quickly need another building
I'm with you in the CAC building

where we wake up graduated out of the coma of our own liver's spasms roaring through our bodies they've come to warn us too late the CAC building illuminates itself all-too-real walls collapse O victory forget your clothes we're free

I'm with you in the CAC building

in my dreams you walk from a fund raising journey on the highway
across America in tears to the door of my house somewhere
(assuming I'll be able to afford it) and explain that none of the
alumni from my class will donate buildings would I please? I
pull out a check and give away my life savings (I'd do it too) and
earmark the money 'bulldozer'.

RACHAEL FINK

PLASTIC LANDSCAPE

plastic red tulips
dripping grey
on neon green
colors so clear
they can only
be leaves of a magazine
if that flower
was on a table
you'd swear it was from a factory

reality is never that bright.
the smells from a bottle - the breezes from a fan

only cheap women
wear perfume
that loud
and her hair is grey and wet
making her pink lipstick vibrate
and the deep purple blue bells shimmer

JENNIFER GRAY REDDISH

JO HUNTS

I live as a slicked-out homefront.
Small enough to fit in backseat
Of rusted-out Volvo.

I call, "Come hither"
Bring your fair-headed brother. I'll spread
The edge of musked waters. Running, shifting
Water that reflects burnt-red light.

We meld to utter explosion,
The moon merges with a sun.

MY HEAVY DAUGHTER

Friend gun, a 1927 Sears & Roebuck special,
Rides in my bra--36 B with cordelia-flower printed cups.
It rests steady as I chase soon-dead Jo down streets.
Lighter than my copper-cuffed bullets, Jo and I cat and mouse it
Past the Milwaukee Light sign. I Screeching

Words: *Jo of wonder, Jo of legs that could flex, wrap*
Around men, trees, cars, barrels. Let me clean
Those black curls that hurry from your scalp. Where'd you be
Without my help...? Comrade

Gun breaks free as I rip him
From bra, black Oxford. Breasts buttons
Then bullets--hot, soprano
Singing babies--fly free.

First, concrete splays. Shrapnel hits, enters my mouth. Fine.
Haven't eaten in three days. The sky becomes sleek.
Large suns and clouds fall. Jo still runs--black shirt torn
In a ragged mountain range of rips. We all must die sometime.

Catching Jo by the snakes of her hair,
I crack her head with Comrade's handle.
Then lift off her face with metal.
Me being quick and all,

I bury her deep
With dirt and cement. I like to eat
Concrete--plant azure and yellowed flowers
Each fall. Now that Jo's my garden
Wall.

ADAM BROWN

SKY CYCLE JUMP

July, 1975

He is strapped into the Sky Cycle. It rests at the base of a twenty foot pole pointing upward at a 70 degree angle. A hundred feet below the pole's tip dark swells and eddies curl on the river's surface, their whitecaps obscured by clouds overhead. The cycle is only slightly larger than his body and is constructed of lightweight fiberglass. Tied in by rope and curled into a fetal position with his bound hands clutching a steel pole for support, he considers the cycle a fiberglass eggshell that has been laid around his bent form. Behind him, kept at a distance by a yellow fence, stands a throng of three thousand onlookers: men with beards and baseball caps, heavy women in pink tank tops drinking beer from plastic cups, boy scouts holding tiny flags alongside girls with rock and roll iron-ons stretched across their breasts.

Months earlier he had stood on the cusp of the ramp at the National Canadian Festival with an ABC sports mike in his hand [klieg lights bouncing off white leather]. He pointed to the sky riddled with spiked pinheads and yelled the only way to make him out was with anti-aircraft guns because in one month they were going to the canyon. The crowd howled.

A sunny day. Eviel and five other men stood next to the launch pole as someone hollered a hoarse countdown. A burst of steam and then the amplified sound of a soda can being opened. The cycle slid up the pole, detached and plummeted, drifting in free fall for a bit then blown back by powerful winds. It continued that way for three hundred feet down, alternately hitting the wall, blowing away and mashing back against it, as if shoved by an invisible hand. When the crew journeyed into the gully to inspect the cycle, they found the cockpit torn in half.

The second shot almost made it to the water. It spun circles all the way down and came to rest on some stony crags by the river's edge. The light reflecting off the debris attracted vultures, who descended lazily to pick their thin hooked beaks through the wreckage. The men stood by the canyon's edge looking down. One of them whistled a slow

"Taps." Earl Greenbacker, Eviel's personal friend and mechanic who had helped him design the Sky Cycle, said, "Well, it was a dumb idea in the first place. You better just call it off because there's no way we're going to get any of these damn Sky Cycles across this gorge."

Eviel turned and walked to his trailer, dust twirling in the footsteps behind him. Two hours later a kid carrying a manila envelope knocked on the door of Earl's trailer. "What're these?" Earl asked, taking the package.

"Walking papers, sir."

1977, Wembley Stadium

He can hear the motor still, grinding over the noise of the audience as he stands upright on the flinging hunk of metal, straining at the handlebars to keep the front end high. Time gels into a dizzy popping whirl, a thousand flashcubes going off at once as the pointed attention of fifty thousand onlookers bores into him like a visceral force. Below him the green painted tops of a dozen double deck buses flicker by like rifled cards. This is England.

Eviel stands rigidly defiant, pulling on the bike, and comes to a place where gravity stands before him: a wheezing drunk whom he shoves over with one rude hand. Then the front end hits the flat part of the ramp and bounces up again. For a half second he hears the world catch its breath. His testicles explode and he rises from the seat, still gripping the handlebars, his body committing a 180 degree rotation so that the back of his head comes to rest against the top of the front wheel. The bike itself begins to turn. Tugged onward by his shifting weight, it completes a full flip, bouncing on top of his body while he tumbles. His pelvis is broken in half. Skin burns off like a meteor kissing the atmosphere as Eviel slides on the turf at a rate of eighty miles an hour. That was one thing he'd specified: turf, not asphalt.

September, 1988

Eviel stand in the lobby of the Cincinnati Hilton wearing a polyester golfing shirt, brown blazer and checkered trousers. He's been invited to attend a convention of academicians interested in examining the pathos of 1970's America. He's being paid two hundred and twenty five dollars.

He stands in the lobby listening half-heartedly as NYU professor Murray Bender rhapsodizes on the preponderance of phenomena that skirted scientific understanding in the seventies: scratched film of a silhouetted shape pausing at forest's edge; footprints in the snow; lights in the sky; scientists listening through headphones to the imagined sound of breathing in a loch. Through a constant field of white noise, people searched for an answer to the mysteries of unexplainable phenomena. To justify Eviel's appeal, Murray cites the fall of three kings: Nixon, Elvis, and Ali. "It was a weird, gnostic time," Murray says, looking almost directly at Eviel. "With nothing left to believe in, people were left with a need to experience dread. Collectively, I mean."

Eviel tips his cigar ash nonchalantly onto Murray's leather shoes. When Murray halts to acknowledge this gesture he suddenly notices that Eviel's face resembles the sullen disapproving countenance of mechanics who tell him it will cost one thousand dollars to replace the tail light on his imported car. It seems as if Eviel's face is flecked with grey.

"Now that's very interesting, son, but maybe you can tell me something else: Where is the pisser? I'm like a race horse drinking cranberry juice in a sauna."

The convention begins the next day. Eviel spends the morning puttering around the hotel room. He stands in front of the bathroom mirror and pulls his lip back, revealing the gum's curvature. He tugs the corner of one eyelid and looks around his eye. Hee Haw comes on, but it's a new version and the girls no longer tweak and purr in short shorts with the hose and heels of great bimbo Goddesses. He discovers that the refrigerator is stocked with beer and soda in price coded chambers and pulls two Budweisers. In the bathroom he drinks and takes his pills. Chewing on them, he thinks before the mirror, like an old mastodon.

October, 1992

Eviel sits in the red leather chair, steering his family size Winnebago through Minnesota darkness. Sheets of fog, thin as floating pages of tracing paper, hang above the road and rush against the glass windshield like white fingers trying to palm the RV. The plastic support system lining his spine begins to ache.

He grasps a tumbler held in a small plastic rack by the dashboard and holds it in his lap for a moment, listening to the droning hum of the van, and, although he knows that his wife and child sleep soundly in the back, he feels at that moment to be the only man on earth. As he rounds a bend, headlights from the Winnebago illuminate a stone mountain cliff lining the road. Eviel pictures his Winnebago as seen from above: a tiny glow-worm winding alone through the country's empty street. Taking in the view back farther, the Winnebago is the only moving glowing thing in the world. He pauses, downs the tumbler, and sets it back in the rack.

Now, Eviel thinks, here I am driving this Winnebago, the only man on Earth. I've done a lot of things in my life, gone through trials and tribulations most men never encounter. For all the pain I've had glory too, so I wouldn't trade it for a thing. But seeing as I've gone through so much and seeing as I'm the only man on earth at this exact moment in time, I think it would only be fair if You gave me a sign as to whether You exist or not. Just between us, because it's only fair, after all I've gone through, that You tell me here on this highway in the dark. I won't tell anyone. Anything will do, a burst of static from the radio, a voice in my head. Just tell me if You're real.

In the distance a single white light appears on the road. His hands shake at the wheel. "Get a hold of yourself," he murmurs, "only a bike." The motorcycle shoots by at a hundred miles an hour, leaving a dull shoosh in its wake. It the rear view, Eviel catches a glimpse of white plastic adorned with red and purple markings. "Jap bike," he mutters, "never jumped on anything but Harley steel..." The road falls silent again. He bends over to find the bottle under the seat, feeling an ache in his surgically reconstructed pelvis.

There is a massive thundercrack, so loud that it sounds like grenades have gone off in both his ears. Instinctively, he leaps up to check the wheel and faces an explosion of white light burning the surface of his eyes. Eviel reels back in the seat, covering his eyes with both palms 'till the pain subsides. He opens them a crack, seeing the wheel in front of him suffused in radiance and turning on its own accord. From the windshield, an angel melts into view, wrapped in green metallic cloth that grows tight where hard breasts press against it. She emotes light, hovering slightly above Eviel in the chair. The angel

tilts her head back, then raises a hand and with one finger pointing makes the slow pattern of an "o," leaving a trail of dripping light.

Eviel reaches around her waist and pulls her to him on the chair. The angel pushes both palms against his chest, shaking her head no. They tumble onto the maroon shag carpet. Eviel's hands are like a pair of raw steaks, scarred and ruptured. One hand burrows under the metallic cloth and tweaks a nipple, whereupon the angel stops struggling and nods alright. She pulls the cloth away from her middle. Eviel wraps his pants around his knees and the angel arches her back, meeting him halfway in a lubricated jolt that sends a pleasurable convulsion down the length of Eviel's plastic spine. The angel flips her knees back against her head and slides down further. He notices she's wearing heels.

Eviel buries his face in her hair and breathes in something akin to Afro-Sheen. She begins a slow grind beneath him, her motions growing tighter as if a spring inside were being pulled taut. Everything starts getting brighter and brighter. Just then, the angel stops moving. She seems distracted; there's something on her mind. It dawns on Eviel then that the whole thing has been a test, the final test faced by each man. The angel will tell him, he's sure, that by pushing her into sex, he's succumbed to base instinct instead of noble impulse and has thus sacrificed his last chance for absolution.

"Wait," the angel says, "let's get some ice cubes."

"Ice cubes?"

The van rips into a skid, sending Eviel and the angel somersaulting into the breakfast table before the sharp sound of impact brings them to a stop. Eviel feels a dull pain that begins in his forehead and grows outward, ringing and palatable. Through it, he hears his name called from the back. "Goddamn," he mutters. The angel arches her hips further, reaches down with one hand and grips him tightly. "I can't," he says, looking at her nebulous eyes.

The next thing he knows Jean is pulling him back from the windshield. He realizes two things: his head is bleeding and his right hand is nestled comfortably in his pants. She places a towel over the wound. "You fell asleep," she says. Eviel leans back in the seat, pressing the towel against his head, and sees a telephone pole through the

fractured glass of the windshield, the many slivered sun rising behind it.

"You're all right? Is the kid okay?"

"She's okay. How could you fall asleep? The van could have flipped, we could have all died, Sara too. Were you drinking? So help me, if you were drinking..."

"God-damn it! Will you get off my back?"

He puts the luxury size family craft in reverse and backs it away from the telephone pole. Then he steps outside to take a look, holding the towel on his head and feeling the tiny asphalt pebbles biting through the sole of his loafers. It wasn't so bad. One of the lights was undone but that was the extent of it.

Eviel climbs back in the van, his head throbbing dully. The little girl is awake now and she pads softly about the inside, rubbing sleep from her eyes. "Why are we stopping?" she asks and Eviel tells her he was crash-testing the Winnebago. "Oh daddy," she says, "haven't you crashed enough?"

"Go back to sleep, angel. This is just a dream."

For the rest of the day Eviel drives, listening to the gospel stations on the AM frequency and their ubiquitous brand of high octane preachers. At noon, Jean feeds everyone bologna on Wonder bread and wraps ice in Bounty towels for his head. At dusk he stops at a motel where the manager rallies him for a snapshot and autograph, then charges him thirty-nine dollars for a single room. Drinks, however, are free and Eviel leaves Jean and Sara for the bar downstairs where he holds court for three and a half hours before trudging back upstairs to the room.

Sara is asleep in a cot and Jean sits up reading the Gideon's Bible. He lies down alongside her. "How's your head?" she asks and he replies that it's better.

Would that were so. The lump has subsided, but Eviel's thoughts are irresolute things, dissolving like smoke rings when he tries to touch them with his hand. He tells Jean everything that happened prior to the collision, except, of course, his lurid dream. Jean tells him it's an act of hubris to seek private audience with God while steering a Winnebago. He nods. "No one gets to meet God," she adds, "until heaven."

It's the notion of heaven that has always given Eviel trouble. He used to tell interviewers, when they asked whether he believed in an afterlife, that he envisioned himself on a porcelain bench beside Martin Luther, Abe Lincoln, and Plato. He always saw this as taking place in a spa for some reason. "Now," he would ask, "what the hell is Eviel Knievel going to have to say to those guys? Heaven," he would continue, "is going to be a place where I can shoot under par ever time I go on the golf course, drink beer without ever getting fat and talk to young girls without my old lady getting steamed."

Since then, however, Eviel has spent more time thinking about heaven and met upon some stumbling blocks. First off, if everyone who ever lived a wholesome life was in heaven, it would be very crowded. He told Jean this once and she said that heaven was infinite, so space didn't matter. "Well," he replied, "infinite or not, everyone's going to be wanting to meet Beethoven or George Washington so you're going to spend a lot of time waiting in line." She told him that heaven worked around that. If you wanted to meet someone, you could just meet them. Heaven was whatever you wanted. He didn't take the argument any further than that, but he continued thinking about it in private. Lying next to her at the Red Oak Motor Lodge, it loomed up in his mind once more.

If heaven was whatever he wanted then everything would be fine for the first ten years. He could trout fish for that long without growing bored. Then it would have to change. He figured he could golf for twenty. Then he could ride bikes for two. Then he would want to chase girls and that was a sin. Forever is a long time to fish and ride bikes. Say he wanted to go to a bar and brawl? With the freedom to do anything in the he world and all the time in the universe to kill, people would eventually start practicing all the sins they weren't supposed to back on earth. Heaven's been going on for such a long time now, by the time he and Jean got there, it would be a full scale riot. Everyone would be sinning just for the hell of it; it'd be worse than a Mexican whorehouse. God would have to clamp down. Install a curfew and throw all the rule breakers in jail, or just send them to purgatory.

These and other ruminations made Eviel think that there wasn't any heaven, that the whole thing was just made up. Dying would be like going to sleep without any dreams, like the type of sleep

they give you at hospitals before an operation. He never told this to Jean because she was devout and he knew it was a lot nicer to think about heaven than nothing at all.

He didn't need to look to know she was sleeping. He could hear both her and the child's breaths vibrating through the silence of the room. He lay there 'till dawn, when the sun creaked through the blinds and he finally nodded off in the folds of his pillow.

July, 1975

He is strapped into the Sky Cycle. A TV camera films the image with a digital countdown running in the lower left hand corner of the screen. A commentator describes the weather, the components of the Sky Cycle, the distance to be crossed (two and a half miles). The cycle has no working parts, really. There is a huge steam compressor at the bottom of the launch pole that creates a thousand ounce pressure system below the carriage. At the appropriate moment, it releases the pressure, propelling the Cycle upward in the same way a miniature water rocket achieves compression. The commentator states that Eviel will experience one G-Force worth of pressure, then, realizing how unimpressive that sound, adds that two G-Forces are enough to induce hemorrhaging.

Ninety miles west is Butte and on the outskirts of Butte sits Eviel's million dollar ranch house. He departed with his family at five that morning. Before leaving, he told his eldest son to run back inside and hang a gift-wrapped painting in the bedroom. This was a gift to his wife on what he thought would be her first night as a widow. The painting showed Snake River Canyon with a white Sky Cycle hung midway between open ended sky and yawning canyon maw. Eviel liked the painting. It seemed to best express the way he felt.

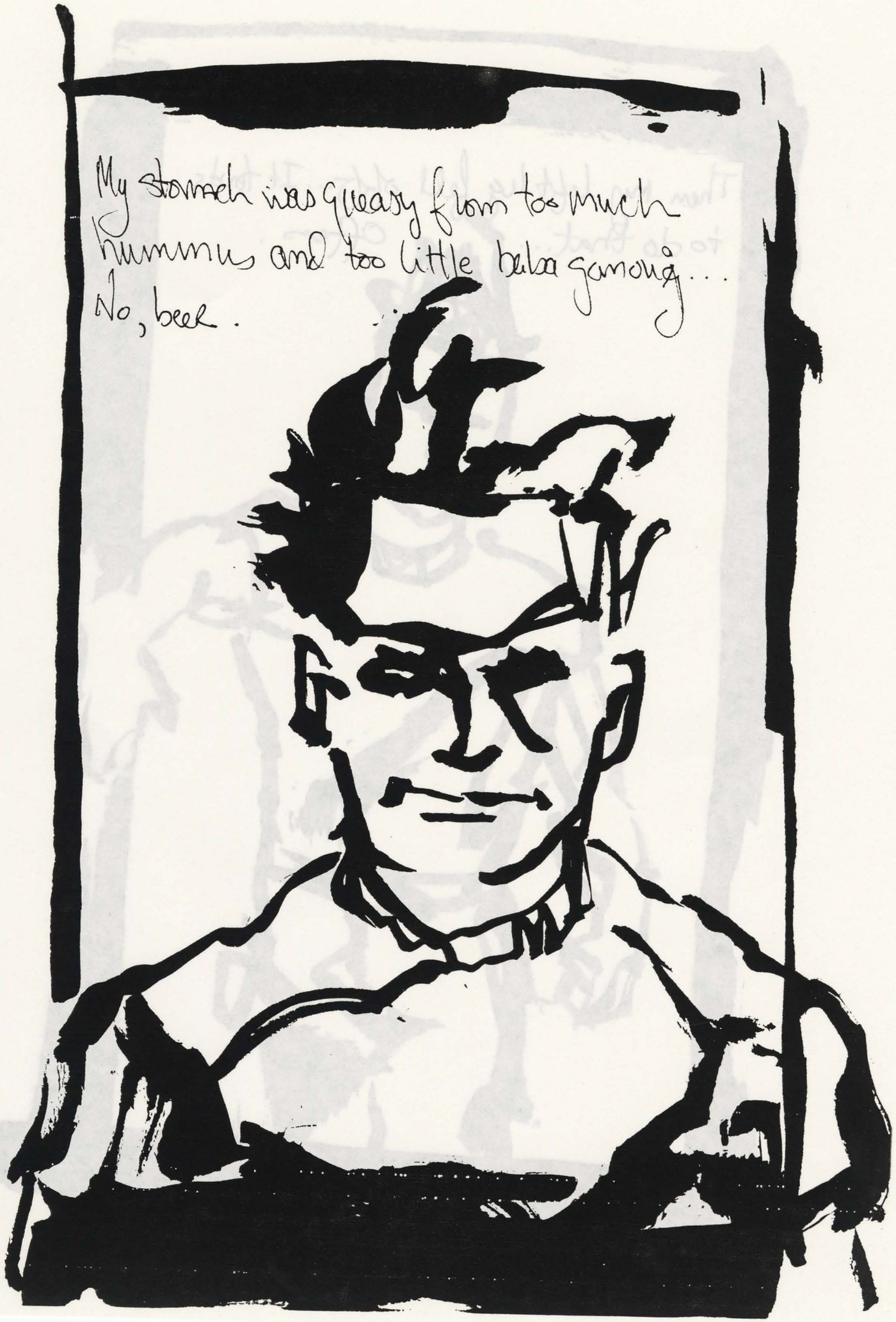
The cycle shoots off the launch pole in a burst of wet steam and immediately a blue parachute spills out the back. A last minute modification. He wasn't a fool; he didn't want to die. for a moment, the crowd isn't sure whether to cheer or to boo. They've gathered out here, in the desert of the West, to see something truly impossible and as they watch the tiny white craft swing lazily toward the currents of Snake River, there is a pervasive feeling that they have been ripped off.

JIM CRAWFORD

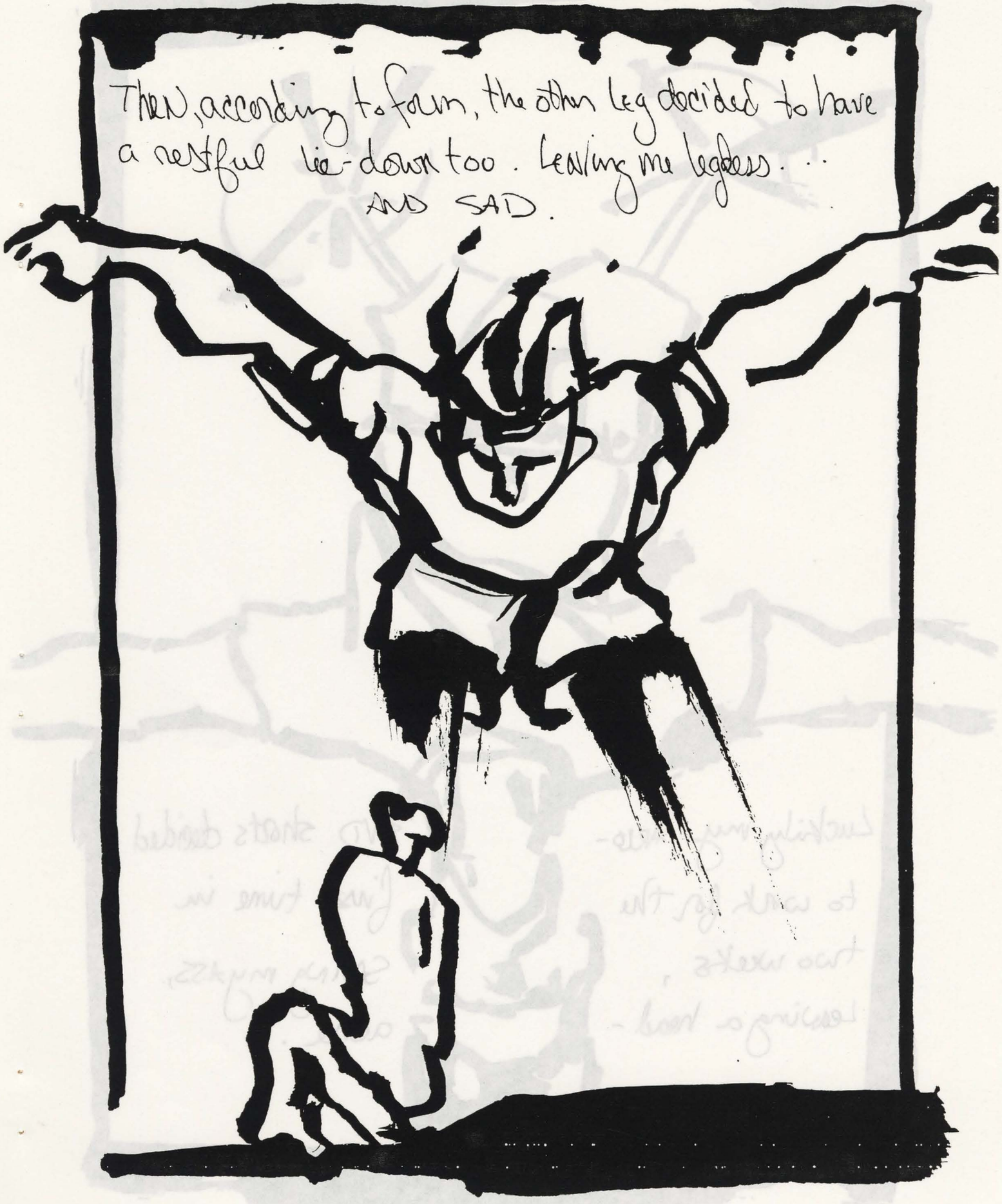
"Parts"

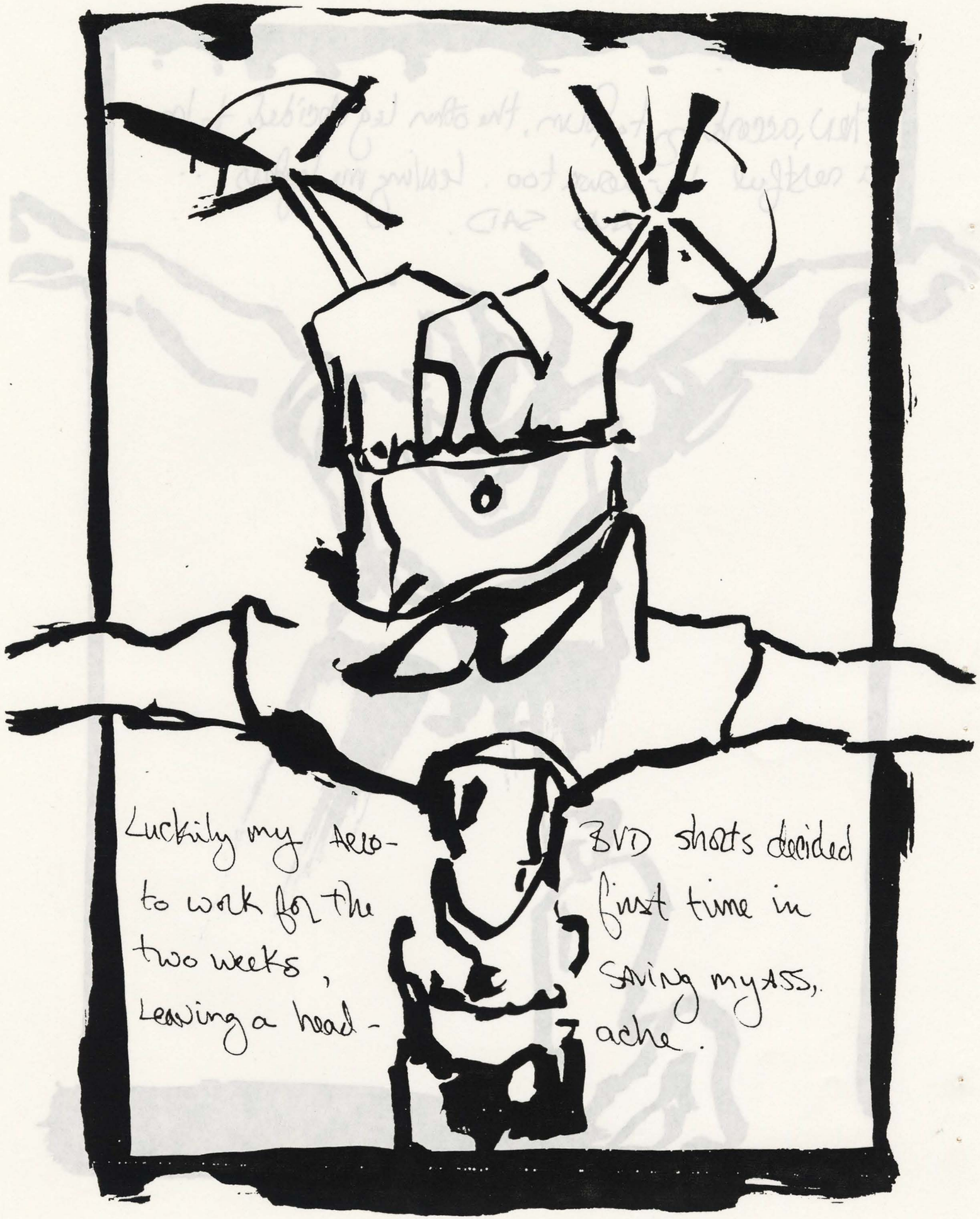
pen & ink

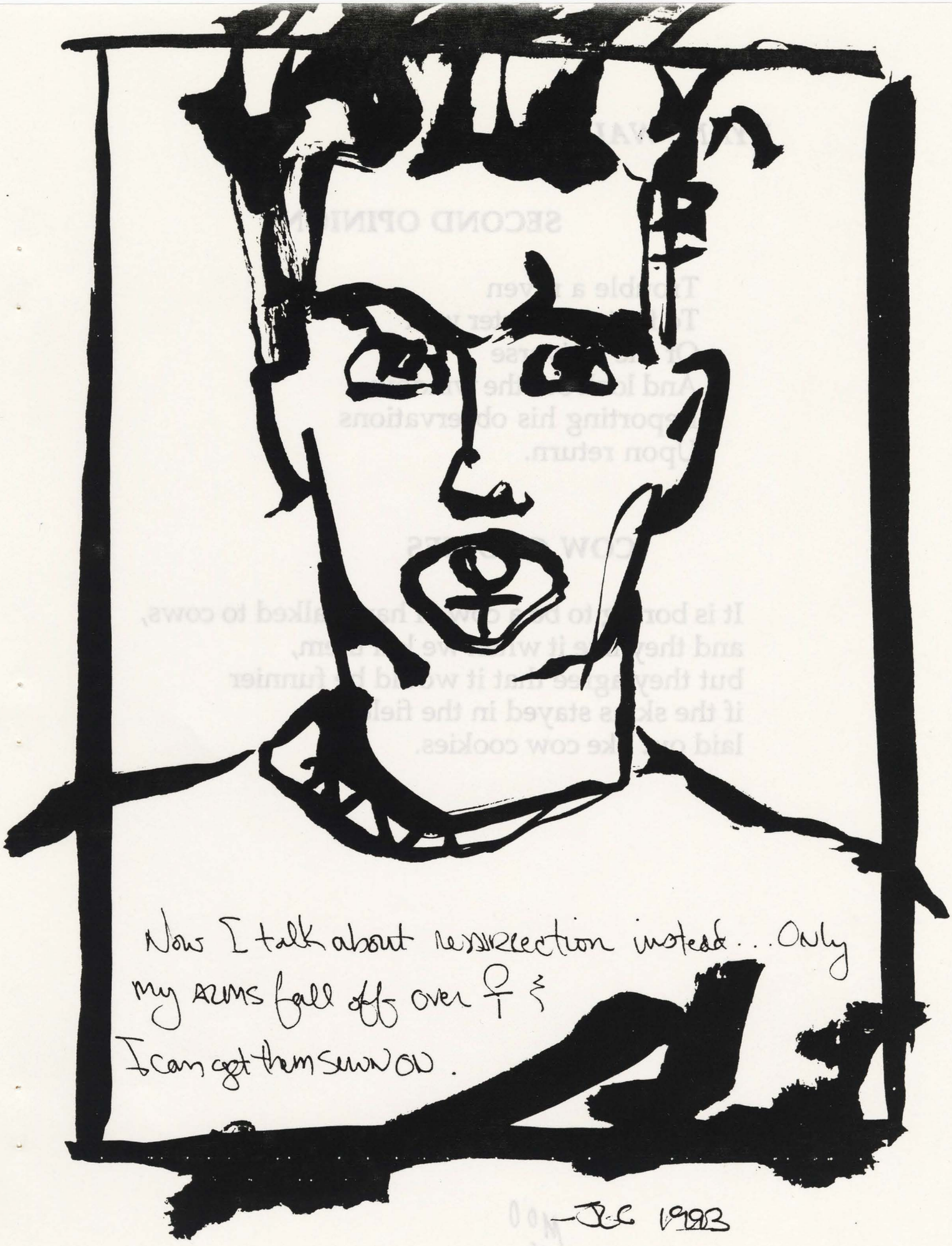
I was walking along thinking about the nature of philosophical cum, moral debate.


My stomach was queasy from too much
hummus and too little baba ganoug...
No, beer.

Then my left leg fell off... It tends
to do that... often.


THEN, according to fawn, the other leg decided to have a restful lie-down too. Leaving me legless...
AND SAD.


Luckily my Aero- to work for the two weeks, leaving a head-
BVD shorts decided first time in saving my ASS, ache.


Now I talk about resurrection instead... Only
my arms fall off over ♀ &
I can get them sewn on.
—JC 1983

RYAN WALKER

SECOND OPINION

Trouble a raven
To fly to the outer wall
Of the universe
And look out the window,
Reporting his observations
Upon return.

COW COOKIES

It is boring to be a cow. I have talked to cows,
and they like it when we kill them,
but they agree that it would be funnier
if the skins stayed in the fields,
laid out like cow cookies.

JEAN DOUGHTY

DEBAUCHERY OF PSYCHE

He came in her while rose petals fell
- Twiddly-Splat -
Flies caressed her thighs,
laying hard boiled eggs without yolks.

Shh! Shh! Her mom's on the stair
Second stair to the first
Second stair to the fifth
First stair squared by the landing

Scrub - Rub a dub dub - Scrub in the tub
Ohhh rubber ducky you're not the one - Ohh, Ohh -
Ohhhh (you're not the one!)

"Bang!Swat!Bitch!" says Love
Three days late and teddy loses his nose
Little black button hole bruise
where people can't see with beady eyes.

Cover Cover - Smile don't shudder - SMILE
(3 months kisses deserve a salty mouth of mayonnaise)

SAXUALITY

Starring through funky blue stench
Into the whorehouse of mixology.
Smoking stale fags, thinking
Of Bessie bleeding to death
Because there weren't any black bandages
To put on the ears of soulless whites.

Groovin' to Billie and Bird
On drunken funked up mornings,
Moving like the monkey that once
Caressed the curves of their back.

Jag and coffee laced
With Strych Nine
In the evening when all good blues players
Cry their listeners into a back alley
café born on low B
and lives at 2nd octave C.

THANE GLENN

SUCH GREEN

All cast in April, papery white on such green
A cabbage moth caught on the screen, frail wings
Like pages quivering open, tossed on my bed--
This remembered swarded valley path between
Wide singing lavender welkin hillsides, strings
Behind, forgotten, left in springs unheard.

And I never knew was I in love with you
Or the earth: wet-green beyond my window sill
Unfolding clover swells, and maybe still
There's time again to turn where heather blew
All cast in April.

WE GATHERING BURRS

We gathering burrs
October afternoon fields
Stick to our shoestrings

Here I am again
Winter here I am again
Window grey again

Sunlight radio
Dogwood white April mornings
Here I am again

Hazy pine sunsets
Dripping by the pool
Slip into your chlorine dream
Here I am again

Quiet shouldering
Dragging the flowers behind
Mow down the old fields

TANYA ANGELL ALLEN

THE LUNATIC, THE LOVER, AND THE POET

I

He is crazy eyed
With the head of a horse
And the body of a man
And he wears deep green
And mud-darkened sneakers
And his fingers are long and thin.

II

Choosing. Poems. Men. Mirage.
April. Ruffles. Renaissance. Whey.

Words. I see them *at night*, as I lie *in* my bed. Word after word, shining up over my head, shining *in* gold, starting with a flash, then fading and disappearing as another takes its place.

Paramecium. Mellifluous. Suite.
Woodcarving. Sacrifice. Fugue.

The words shield me, protect me, save me from sad thoughts and the nightmares which gallop over my walls and ceiling each midnight. During the day the words follow me, watching over me as I walk, down the stairs, on the road, into town. When I work, I hold a pen, and when the words come I write them on paper, and when I run out of paper I write them on the back of my hand.

Buttercup. Triplets. Woman. Eyesight.

By the end of an hour my hand is covered with words. By the end of two hours more words have crept to my elbow. By the end of a

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Buttercup. Triplets. Woman. Eyesight.

By the end of an hour my hand is covered with words. By the end of two hours more words have crept to my elbow. By the end of a

day my whole arm is covered with syllabic armor, as well as my knees and shins. I save the words so that someday I can take needle and thread and string them into poems.

Scatters. Brightly. Slipshod. Sherry.
Terraced. Feline. Holly. Face.

The words are whispering after me as I walk to town--I am going for a loaf of bread and a honey jar. I'd also like to find some little balls of butter, like the ones I remember seeing at parties, next to plates of tiny muffins. I miss the little balls of butter, as it has been a long time since I've been to a party. The words long ago drummed away most of my friends and loves, aside from those who come through the letter-slot at noon, in ballpoint ink and watermarked paper.

I now walk the street, marking rhythms with my feet, head down, watching my toes. The people pass in blurs of color--orange and red and blue--jostling each other, tripping on cobblestones, and even, once or twice, being connected to each other by hands.

Philippic. Soliloquy. Tintinnabulation.
Desultory. Gargoyle. Fracture.

I walk into a grocery store, breathing in the smell of vegetables and ice, flowers and bagels and ham. The colors of the foods expand all around me, and I go to the bread-section, to smile at a bread loaf of raisins with icing on its side. I pick it up, cradle it, smile at it again, and turn.

My eyes are immediately drawn to the aisle with the cereals and Poptarts and the Crazy-Eyed-Horse-Man, who is crouching down to take a box of oatbran from a lower shelf. His cart is filled with carrots and apples. He hasn't seen me yet, so I take my loaf of bread and walk quickly to another aisle, my heart beating weirdly, searching for honey.

Honey...honey....

My eyes search the shelves so hard I almost smash into a cart filled with apples and carrots. I look up, and the Horse-Man nods, steps to one side, and gives a great, sweeping bow.

I smile a tiny smile and squeeze the bread so hard that when I look down on it later I realize I have cracked the icing. The Horse-Man

is speaking to me. I can't understand what he is saying, but I smile and nod and giggle at what I think might be appropriate times. We stroll through the produce aisle, and by the dietetic foods. The Horse-Man whinnies softly as I hug my loaf of raisin-bread-with-icing.

I find my jar of honey, and in the dairy aisle, where the cheese and milk is kept, find some butter in balls shaped like rosebuds. And I help the Horse-Man find sugar cubes. And while I check out, the Horse-Man buys me a white rose, which he presses into my hand as we go through the automatic doors onto the street.

I look down at the flower. It feels cold to my hand. Everything starts swirling, so I give an awkward curtsy and walk away, clutching my brown paper bag and the flower, whose thorns cut my fingers. I can feel the Horse-Man staring after me as he cradles his own bags of carrots and apples and sugar cubes and milk....

III

Syllable. Strawberry. Cellar door.
Willow. Lullaby. Violets.
Aria. Icicles. Butterfly. Venus.

I am walking, taking a break from the writing-down of words, sunlight warm and long on the ground. I step off the main road and start down a lane of grass. I tread carefully, quietly, the tree-limbs meeting over me, the sky blue and white, the air smelling of lawn. After I walk for a mile I turn my head, and see the Horse-Man.

He is running circles in a field, wearing his sneakers and a dark-green tee-shirt, which is damp from his sweat. I duck behind a tree before he can see me. When I peek out again, pressing my fingers to bark, lips slightly parted, he is taking off his shirt. The side of my mouth twitches upwards. I climb the tree.

I straddle a heavy branch, bark harsh against the skin of my thighs, palms dirty and brown from the climb, and look out from between leaves. He is now far-off, running with long, loping strides, a tiny horse-headed monster against the hills. Now he is closer, and I clutch the limb. Now he is under my tree, panting, with his hand against the trunk. I can see beads of sweat on his broad pink shoulders,

and his jeans hang low on his hips. He tosses his mane and snorts, and my shoe falls off of my foot.

I watch as it falls. It hits the ground and bounces. The Horse-Man looks up.

I sit frozen. The Horse-Man's eyes are sideways, and enormous. We stare at each other, paralyzed, as an early cricket begins creaking somewhere else.

There is a sound--a sort of opening crinkle. We stare into each other a second more, then together wrench our heads and look into the sky, as the sky begins to unfold, and a tiny face leans out of a cloud. It is a woman, her face golden, her hair disheveled. She waves her arm, her large blue sleeve breezing back and forth, and starts screaming in high soprano "Blessings! Blessings!"

And then...a thousand scraps of color--sapphire and violet and fire and gold--pouring down on us--emerald and turquoise and ruby and silver...I cling to my branch as the colors surround us, dancing, filling the air...the Horse-Man has his back to me. I climb out of the tree, pull off my other shoe, fling it behind me, and run, as the Horse-Man screams.

I smash into the colors. Their wings hit my arms, my legs, my breasts and mouth. A few fall under my naked feet. I turn my head and behind me the air is so filled with colors that I can barely see the Horse-Man, who stands with his arms spread and his head thrown back as they cling to him, all over him, perching on his shoulders, in his mane, on his fingers...I keep running.

My lungs are aching and my breath keeps coming to my mouth with silent squeals but I keep going, panting...and finally hit open air....

They are all behind me, their silence gone. I keep running, skirt hoisted above my knees, fabric balled in one hand, the other hand fisted and free, my feet smashing against the earth. I stumble on a rock and fall.

My knees and hands hit the ground. I gasp and hold my breath. The birds chirp quietly, and the world has become deeper blue. I close my eyes, settle back on my knees, and moan, pressing the bottoms of my palms to my face.

Then I get to my feet, lower my head and walk, slowly, slowly, limping on blood-stained feet.

IV

Nickels. Communion. Dispersed. Barrette.
Bluebird. Starling. Darkening. Lost.

I am sitting at a picnic table, eating a slice of bread spread with butter and honey, and I am writing. Words are overflowing my paper, arms and legs.

Kneading. Crinkle. Listening. Ice.
Furtive. Calling. Larkspur.
Curve.

I look up. The Crazy-Eyed-horse-Man is standing at the edge of my lawn. He has a light grey book with *Collected Works of Shakespeare* written in silver on its side. I look at the table. At my paper. At my hand. At my words. At a tree. At the cheshire cat crossing the grass. At a...he comes towards me. My breath becomes shallow. He places the book in front of me, open, lines marked with pen in midsummer-night blue. I stare at the page. He walks away.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are all of imagination all compact:
...Such tricks hath strong imagination
That if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

V

That evening I walk onto my porch and find it littered with white roses. I jump back inside my house, close the door, lean my head against the wood. Somewhere in the distance cats yowl.

Pillow. Fetal. Ashes. Pillow. Wet.

I open the door again, and slowly walk out to sit in the middle of the flowers, staring at the trees and whispering

Rotten. Fishing. Fleeing. Hunt.

I can see heat lightning, flickering silently, far off, leaping from cloud to cloud...I watch and wait for the rain and whisper words as I tear apart the roses with my thumbs and forefingers.

VI

Apple. Weaving. Torture. Tall.
Carlight. Moonbeam. Pattern. Flash.
Rainbow. Midnight. Slipper. Bless.
Crashing. Mantle. Cranny. Fear.
Mindful. Running. Grisly. Horse.
Silence. Waiting. Sweetened. Stain.
Open. Ocean. Bleeding. Know.

The rain has been coming down for days--drops spinning dime-like on the street; streams flooding, turning brown; clouds sticking, making roofs; earthworms dying in driveways.

I've locked myself in my bedroom, hating the flooding, the greyness, the nights I can't see stars, and the Crazy-Eyed-Horse-Man who now paces, back-and-forth, along the edges of my lawn.

I watch him from behind my curtain, which I pull aside slightly, peering out, using only one eye. He paces along the edges in his rain-soaked sneakers, tosses water off his mane, snorts, then raises his fist, and shakes it towards my house. I close the curtain before he sees....

My radiator hisses and clanks--comforting, warming, masking sounds of rain and the scrape of tree-limbs against my window. My bed-table light is on, making a lopsided circle of light. A red-leather book is on my blanket: *Emily Dickinson's Poetry*. A white rose is on my dresser. My walls are white.

I stare into my mirror--blond hair, brown eyes. Bee-stung lips. My dress is cream and cotton, and I am pale, with freckles.

The radiator clanks. I rub my hand along my arm, turn from the mirror, stare at the rose.

Gilded. Suffrage. Thirsty. Thyme.
Idyll. Whisper. Footstool. Whine.

The radiator clanks. I hate rain. There are cashews in a jar beside my mirror. The rose is shuddering. Someone is rapping on the window. I want to hide in the dark under the bed, but go to my record player and turn on Bach. I sit in a chair that is near to the door, pull my knees to my chin, and my nightgown to my toes.

Declining. Garret. Dying. Sun.
Message. Filling. Whiteness. Cost.

He is at the window, fiddling with it, fingers trying to shove up its bottom. He gets it open a crack and the curtains fly open. I can see his face. There is a white star on his forehead and his hair and head are brown and his lips pull back from his teeth and I see that they are yellow. He snorts and neighs and pounds on the window with his fists.

Rushes. Lightning. Jasper. Wren.
Lava. Hobble. Triumph. Down.

His eyes meet mine, and they are pleading, hurting, anguished, pained. I am drawn to them, drawn to my feet, out of my seat, drawn to the window, breath tearing my lungs, heart beating so hard I think it's going to stop. I stare into his sideways pupils and press my hands against the glass. He touches the outlines of my hands with his own fingers, and then I gasp and fling my arms around myself and back away as he steps back, and leaps,

And crashes through the glass, crashes through the words, crashes through, shards exploding in light, crashes through, glass making music against walls and floor, words writhing on the ground

Mugwort Treestem Flower Fill
Tower Daughter Simple Scream
Danger Honey Nightly Where
Ashcan Streaming Seeping Spit

Crashes through, his arms bloody, his mane wet, crashes through to dip his head against my neck, crashes through to hold me, pull me to the warmth and strength and thinness of his body, his scent of musk and cloves and sugar and oats....

His arms fold against my back and I let myself collapse into them...wire turning to thread, brick to cloth...words scream

Sky Moment Save Choke
Bearded Faint Pier Wish
No Fight Want Fail
Change Shrinking Branch Sway Stay

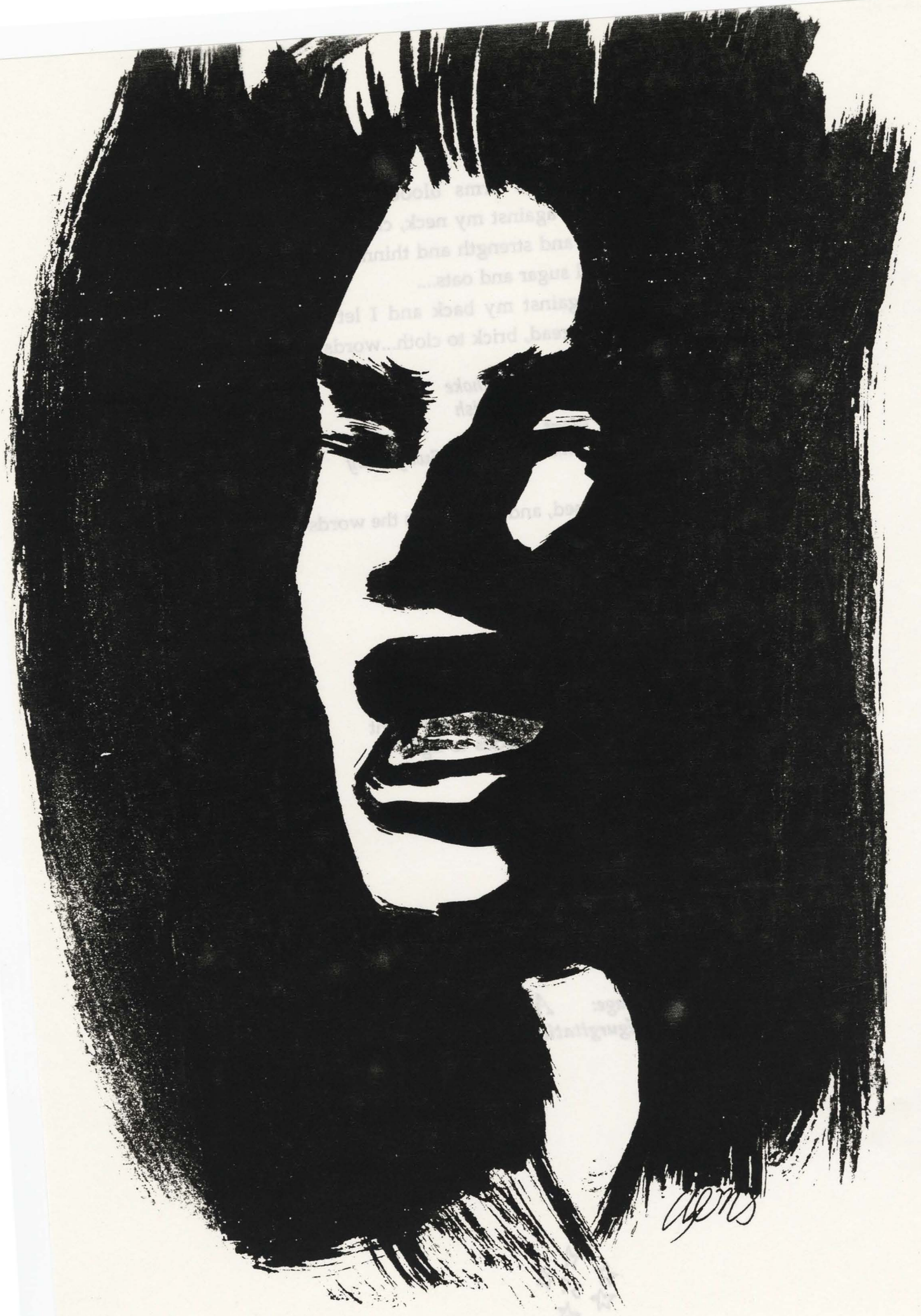
I keep my eyes closed, and swallow as the words fade, and fade....

VII

He is crazy eyed
With the head of a horse
And the body of a man
And he covers me with night
And rhythm fades to light
And he beats the words away.

*

following page: ***ANDREW JM STONE***
"Régurgitation de la Refusé # 1"
ink wash



J. TARIN TOWERS

WHAT I DID TODAY

Woke up and the phone rang.
Told them you don't live here.
Went back to bed and kissed you
goodbye. Stared at the ceiling.
Got up again, showered, smoked
cigarettes. Stared at your body
while you slept. Cleaned the bathroom.
Threw away my diaphragm. Ate a little
oatmeal, drank a lot of coffee. Stared
at the tv. It was still off, you were still
out. Took out the trash. Slept.

NEXT

This night enfolds me in its branches/the sky
has given me up for lost, and I am/I am
lost inside the next/
the scrabbling fetishy
fingers on my breasts/only remind me
of next/and they do it again/
they belong me
with itself, these branches, these obelisks,
these velvet bristles/
The night enfolds me
with its whiskers, I am next, I am twinespun
shoulders, I am left to be next. I follow it/
then/
these hairless follicles. Deep/ then again/
shallow/ or perhaps keen/
Begin again next/
stop there next/
And again the night

"I want my symbol 2b a penis."
--Tarin Towers

MIKE SAPP

SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

1

This is the first section of the first section in which Rosie, my lover of two years and countless trials and minor tribulations and I have a chat, taking place on Thursday, November 10 around six in the evening in our bedroom on the second floor of our Foxridge town-home apartment.

-Come on, let's, she said. I'd like it first thing in the evening. It'd be nice with purple light outside the window and the sounds of kids being called home.

-Not now.

-This coming from the sexual. . .

-I said not now.

- Jesus. Okay. Well then, what did you do all day?

-Nothing.

-Well if you're trying to get me wondering, it's working. I know you weren't in class.

-They called?

-Of course they called. It's not that I'm prying, but I'd like to know.

-It's not that you're prying. I went up into Rockville to a cemetery.

-Seeing Hemmingway's grave again?

-No- it's Fitzgeralds, and no, I wasn't. This was a different one further down Kennington. Name of St. Gregory, a Catholic place. You could say I was burying a friend.

-Legally, or will I have to tell the cops you don't live here anymore if they show up tonight?

-Don't joke, Rosie.

-What's wrong with you?

-I'm thirsty. Hungry. I'm cold in these damn cheese-cloth sheets. And your clock does nothing all day but tick.

-What would you have it do? Sing?

-Goddamnit don't joke.

-Sorry. Jesus. You're awfully snappy.

-Yes I'm snappy. Turn off the light, please.

-It's six-thirty. You're not going to sleep?

-Jesus, I'm old enough to go to goddamn sleep when I want to.

-Are you sick?

-A little. Don't touch me.

-You have a fever.

-Yes yes yes. Leave. Get the light.

-Who was at the graveyard?

-Kathleen Conners.

-Who was she?

In this section I provide vital information on the dead ex-girlfriend and the reason for my general listlessness. Listen: at this point in my life prior to my emotional isolationism you can easily recognize the snooping germs of my mental illness, so called.

Inexpressible! Darling snooping Rose, your questions! Remember: when I curl up in sheets like a potato bug with back supine to you, leave your questions till the morrow. Kathleen Conners. You asked who she was, excusable enough except for your 'was'. I am tender tonight about verb tenses. Kathleen: she was baker, suitor, lover, child. She was young, expressive, passionate, conservative. Yes with cold lips

and a tendency to exhale the last breath during a kiss. If you could leave these things to me, Rosie, how happy we could be! I am guilty of no crime. I took a bottle of wine and found her grave, still pregnant with mound of unsettled turf, and sat there, alternately drinking a pull and pouring out a bit on the ground. It's all a selfish romantic plot; I think it's a good image to be the grief stricken-Hamlet to my sodden ex-lover, yes, the poor mad suitor spilling the Chate Bloc on the grave of a girl who never drank a drop in her life. Excuse me for that, Kathleen, but the idea of sharing a postmortem bottle with you struck me with such dramatic force that it needed to be done. And so I had a chilly conversation with a hump of clod: "Clod, do you remember this we had?" Ha, yes. "Tuft of grass, remember the time your father took a branding iron to the back of my head?" That was tragic, my dear. "Grub, darling, I remember very well your signature kiss, the tiny peck that came after many others in our youthful thrashing, a tiny closed-mouth job that ended proceedings with a tender finality."

My flair for the romantic dissolved into my habit for the dramatic. I was left with three swigs in the bottle, which I downed on the way to the car, and soggy socks that creeped down past my instep. My head was a bit agog and breathing was reduced to through-the-mouth only. It all would have been nicer to leave it there- the grief-stricken, slightly maddened young man stumbles off into the setting sun, etcetera, but I forgot where I parked the car and in looking for it I realized that I was neither grief-stricken nor mad.

Return to the signature-tune of my life, the swooping cadences and soft melodies of conversation with the now-perturbed Rose McFadden. Sometimes, even at now at this late date, I wonder if she ever realized she was more of a trumpet than a sand-flute, although in prior

conversations it was clear that she felt an affinity for woodwinds of the smallish variety, perhaps hoping to imitate the sounds of the fragile brush-doves which lived in our eaves.

-Nobody of consequence.

-Well then why did you even go out there?

-It's just a matter of respect.

-Was she an old *girlfriend*?

-You're in a suspicious frame of mind. Yes, she was, but it was a hell of a long time ago. Don't worry.

-Don't worry? As if I'm jealous of a dead girl.

-Turn. Off. The light.

-You're not serious?

-Damn it, yes I am.

-Aw, my man is depressed. He needs some cheering. Let me-

-Don't. Come on. Don't!

-Jesus. Okay. I know better than to. . . What, was she you're first love?

-I don't believe in first loves.

-Okay, yes, she was. My first love was Daniel DelGaddo in the twelfth grade, he. . .

Music now switches tempo: I hear kettle drums and harsh cellos - why did my Rosie have the absolute *need* to take over all conversations? I feel that this is indicative of a worm in her psychology, poor muddled thing. In this section we experience an oscillation back to the interior dramatic monologue. Even at this early stage I felt life was a circle rather than a line. It is only possible to revisit and reinvent old experiences, a rather sad confession on my part because I would rather achieve something.

Daniel DeSomething go hang. Rosie your mouth works like crazy in that putty head of yours: Duh duh daniel Duh duh something. You

want to discuss first loves? Well here I am taking pen to paper, you ask Freud how screwed up that means *I* am. Daniel Duh Something. Mine, my Kath, upon appearing at the door, her shoulders would rise up into a shrug- a gesture from antiquity related to the smirk and the startle reflex. Simply speaking, she was glad to see me. You never shrug, my Rosie, and your lips are only infrequently cold. I remember Kathleen's hips swelling so, just so, so her shirt dropped with the incline- and me, behind her also laying, over her left ear, arm crooked through the valley of waist to rest on her hand. Said I, noticing her potato-bug position, with legs curled up and back curved, 'You're all scrunched up, little bug,' and she smiled moderately at that.

Rosie, the saga of Daniel Duh was too long. I was floating with my own notions and only picked up what snatches of your words that the winds delivered. I looked down and saw that I was on a wooden skiff made out of driftwood, tied with seaweed. There was a mast and a heavy leather sail which I could choose to unfurl. A small wooden box was placed near the mast where I could sit during the nights. Oh I was drifting away and my name was Somebody the Sailor and I no longer cared about whatever pettiness plagued those on land. For food I caught fish with a piece of twine and a bent safety pin. The seagulls would circle my skiff, cawing for the heads. Depending on my mood I would either toss them eyes, brains, tails, or chase them away by waving both arms. At night I sang lonesome songs a cappella. I floated where the tides chose, passing docks on which acquaintances waved blue or green scarves, hoping I would dock, but there is no docking for Somebody the Sailor, who is making his slow and quiet journey to Byzantium, island of golden birds and solitude.

Rosie speaks, I speak, a conversation between trumpet and banjo.

. . .and after that I saw him once or twice driving his truck down my road, and I knew he didn't have any reason to be there, except if he was just checking to see if there were any cars in front of the house. Paulo, are you listening?

- I'm trying to fall asleep, Rosie. I would get along much better if you would do the kind thing and switch off the lamp.

-Tell me about her.

-Later, I swear. Right now I'm too beat.

-You'll tell me later?

-I promise, for christsakes. Do you want me to sign a contract?

-No. I'm just bothered by you, if you go to some grave yard to see an old girlfriend get buried and then you're trying to sleep in the afternoon, and also you're so snappy. I'm trying to help you and you just. . . Well if you don't want me to help I can't. I won't force. . .

(Nice link between)

won't force any confessions out of Somebody, because his face is bathed in golden light and everyone calls him the golden child in addition to his sailing title. No one dares ask explanations from Somebody the Golden Child, who is tired of all petty gossip and refuses to speak ever again about anything worthy. Everyone should slink away from his golden face in their shame and destitution, through streets greased with bile and vomit, to sleep an uneasy night in cages too small. Their pettiness, their sweaty dreams, are nothing to Golden Somebody, who has drifted away between dark black waters and orange skies. At night after the songs, when Somebody is heavy with fatigue, his shoulders sink and his head lolls and this is when spectators, if there were any,

would notice the discomfort that the Sailor hides when he walks. He finally sleeps in a potato-bug position, gripping his abdomen while his lips work soundlessly at some recitation he has set before himself for that night: *I went into the elderwood,* or *Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in* or *In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy wood...*

2

It was the next morning, when, waking with a headache, hazy vision, and an acidic feeling in my pot, I decided that I would no longer speak in anything but poetry. In retrospect, this puzzles me.

-Get up, for Christsakes, she said. If you miss your appointment Litz will have another fit and I'm not going to listen to you badmouthing him all over again. Where did you put my jacket when you cleared out the closet? Paulo! Goddamnit I'm not responsible for getting your stupid ass out of bed every morning. Sit up. Are we totally out of orange juice? Jesus, we are. You would figure someone besides me would get groceries *every once* in a while. Are you up? I'm coming in there in one minute and if you're not up. . . Jesus, can't you remember to put the tie back on the bread after you. . . Get up! I'm leaving. Look, I'm on my way out. Sit up at least so I know you'll get up. Come on.

-Were you but laying cold and dead, and lights were paling out of the west, you would come hither, and bend your head, and I would lay my head upon your breast.

-What?

-I refuse to speak in anything but poetry.

-Are you still sick?

46 (cigarette)

- *And you would murmur tender words, forgiving me, because you were dead.*

-You really do try me, you know. If you're not going, try to call Litz to cancel the appointment. I've got to leave now or I'll be late, and-

-*Nor would you rise and hasten away, though you have the will of wild birds-*

-I'll see you around three.

So begins day one of isolation. It was a chilly fifty-three degrees. The sun was hazy as seen through bedroom window and later as it swam above Dundalk port authority but was obscured by vicious clouds out near the boarded-up Dairy Queen by Rockville. A summary of events directed towards Rosie, who is still none the wiser.

The first day of my moral isolationism proceeded very well, Rosie, and you are none the wiser. Wave your scarf from the dock, then, while I unfurl my sails and catch a north-westerly wind toward Rockville. It is easy to sail inside houses, through doorjambs, even down highways. My skiff is immaterial, my ocean is as wide as wherever I travel.

My Kathleen and I had a chat, this one *sans* wine, in which we both decided that we respected each other's decisions and would in the future have a long-standing professional relationship based on our mutual admiration for our new livelihoods, her being dead and I being a sailor. Shortly thereafter we lapsed into an easy silence and I surveyed the graveyard from my vantage point on the ground in front of her stone. We agreed that the leaves, which blew in profusion across the lawn, were not, as is commonly believed, beautiful. She said they were like locust husks and I likened them to dried patches of skin swatches. We get along well, my cold Ophelia and I.

Then as I was leaving she called out to me to put on my gloves. I explained that I had none, as sailors must work constantly with jig ropes and be able to tie knots quickly. She must have frowned in the dark over this. I bid her farewell, leaned hard on the rudder, and caught a south-westerly current home. Happily I sailed down ninety-five, and passing the University on the left scanned the parking lot for familiar cars. A glance at my watch revealed that I, as Paulo the graduate student, was expected in Litz' office with a another chapter of my skimpy dissertation on the modernists, a project which I now recognized as roughly the same as copying old criticism into a fresh cover, to be placed on a shelf for in hopes that it will be recopied in twenty-year revolutions. How happily I sailed by, feeling the glare of sun on the nape of my neck, the spray, and the harsh cawings of my friends the hungry seagulls.

In thanks to you, my gentle judges, I will now quickly tie and untie sailor's knots for your amusement while those of you who want refreshments refresh and those with stiff backs, legs, necks rise and unkink themselves. We are different bits of string, I joke, to get kinked up into knots through lack of assertion. Pay attention! The jig knot! The half-pike knot! The wounded goose! The bloody elbow! Do you need coffee or cigarettes? In three minutes time I will humbly return to my story, the next section which takes place in two settings simultaneously: the first being my and Rosie's living room, and the second O yes the wide black sea near a golden beach.

-Did anyone call this afternoon?

-(No response.)

-Paulo, did anyone call?

-No.

-How are you feeling?

-Ah, *Poetry, music, I have loved, and yet because of those new dead that come into my soul and escape confusion of the bed-*

-Jesus, I forgot about your poetry game. It's annoying.

The same moment, part two:

Somebody, feet firmly placed against the mast, struggles to free the sail lines from the catch in the wood, afraid the vicious winds which have sprung up from the opening of the door may splinter the mast and leave him forever at mercy of the tides. The sun is a harsh glare and it is hard to squint and release the catch with his battered, water-soaked fingers. He does it- the hook comes unhooked, the clasp unclasped, and the sail drops. Cheers. Congratulations. He now focuses his eyes on the East, to investigate the direction from which the wind sprang, and sees a vision of either a Siren or a Calypso. Somebody the Sailor quickly decides her name is None the Wiser.

Mists swirls around her, lifting stands of hair in a vortex-pattern as she drops her keys and pocketbook onto the couch. She takes one step forward and her feet crunch on damp sand, at the same time she places one flat hand over her eyes to scan out into the ocean, and, seeing Somebody's craft, begins to sing:

Did anyone call this afternoon?

Somebody is frantically tying his waist to the mast with a piece of dried seaweed. He is good with knots.

Did anyone call?

No! cries the terrified Somebody as his twine slips free of his clumsy fingers. A wave blasts into the far side of the skiff, lifting it on angle so that Somebody can see None the Wiser as from a great distance beyond and above.

How do you feel? sings None the, and Somebody, gripping the mast as his skiff is twisted by the waves, sings his incantation: *Poetry, music, I have loved, and yet because of those new dead that come into my soul and escape confusion of the bed-*

None the Wiser lifts off the beach, arms out-lifted toward Somebody, the mists around her molding itself into an evening gown of diamonds, singing still, hair lifting and whipping slowing in the wind, she approaches with small steps through the ever-brightening air. Somebody is struck by her beauty and lets go of the mast. He tumbles off his skiff into the cascading waves, sinks with her song in his ears *Jesus, I forgot about* and by this point Somebody's shoulder gets struck by his skiff as he struggles for air, and he sinks further. *Your poetry game* she sings, and Somebody is reeling under the waves in a cork-screw pattern, heading down. *It's annoying,* she sings, and on the bottom of the sea Somebody stares up through the now-calm waters and watches as her dainty feet make circular splashes on the surface as she heads to the kitchen for a look in the refrigerator.

Having thus died, I crossed my legs and stared up at the distortion of the moon created by the waves overhead and thought about my options, which were few, until my only dead friend Kathleen showed up and we decided to talk things over.

-Kath.

-Oh, Hello why it's Somebody the Sailor, recently drowned by the Enchantress Wiser, lured into a watery grave before your time. You should have stayed with me, darling Someone. I would not have drowned you.

-I'm here now. Glub glub.

-I thought you only spoke in poetry.

-That was only to the living, love.

-She'll try to call you back. She'll try to lure you out of the waters to a banquet dinner but if you go she'll turn you into a pig.

-I've heard of that. I'm not going. I'm staying here.

-I'm glad. Hold my hand, Golden Somebody.

-You look nice, Kath; the pale moonlight and salt brine gives your cheeks an attractive pale fire. But I think you need a mythical name. Your skin, my love, is grey, and so are your robes. So-

-I will be whatever you want.

-We can always figure it out later.

-Where were you going on your skiff, Sailor?

-Byzantium. Island of golden birds and solitude. To where I hear they have nice beds of flowers or something to sleep on.

-Where is that?

-I have no idea. It's from a poem. God I'm sleepy. But even so, I have to start wondering how we can talk under water, and how you traveled from your grave to the bottoms of the sea to be with me. (Not that I'm not glad for your company.) And why I'm dead but still thinking, looking, and why it's so pleasant under all this water.

-Stop with your criticisms, Somebody. You are right, it *is* nice down here, and the rest can be explained. If you're sleepy rest. I'll stay here and wake you in an hour's time. If you're hungry let me fix you

Important interior monologue.

Hungry, says she? The dead girl offers food?

Back to Kathleen.

-. . . fix you a nice shellfish la basque or-

-I think not. I refuse to touch or eat anything, to sleep or remain here another moment. I have reason to suspect your motives. Save your pomegranates, or forbidden fruits, or-

-What? Somebody! Nothing is forbidden! You can leave if you want to, of course, but I was hoping you would stay! Its so lonely sometimes - I'm sure you know that, you're a sailor after all - but you and I, we had something, and now that you are dead and I'm dead, I thought we could. . .

Meanwhile, None-the Wiser is in the kitchen, humming

something that reminds me strangely of my mother, no: all mothers. Do all mothers hum like that, absent-mindedly while fixing broken burners, putting on stew, washing? Why do they do those things, anyhow? It is a sweet sound. I nod my head to realize that Rosie is indeed a small woodwind. I cock my ear toward the shimmering white square of open kitchen door. It is a timeless, melancholy sound, her humming. If I asked her to stop she would say 'stop what?' The music is invisible to her. I try my legs. They work fine. My arms likewise possess the necessary motorization. Kathleen has prepared me a plate of eggs. *No!* I scream, *I'm not hungry!* Kathleen has prepared me a neat bed on a luxurious clam shell. *No!* I scream, *I'm tired but I'm not* that *tired!* She grips my arm and pulls herself into me, wanting, I believe, to dance. This must be the third test, but it is a poor one because I hate dancing and, more importantly, the real Kathleen would have known that. She's a phony, for christsakes. She opens her mouth for a kiss of farewell but I was already swimming for the surface.

I suppose, Doctors, that I made it to the surface. I crawled onto the beach and made for the kitchen. I began the arduous task of crossing the flaming beach to the door, but as has been previously mentioned I was awful tired, having perhaps been subjected to some kind of spell, and midway of this my blazing beach I found myself at the edge of consciousness, faltered, slept.

3

-Paulo. Paulo, get up you're on my coat.

-What?

-Get up, I said. Here. Give me your hand.

-Wait a. . . wait up. Were you going to try to feed me anything?

-You're such a pig sometimes. You can make your own dinner. There's soup but were out of bread.

-Well. Okay. Where, um, are you going?

-I'm going to class. It's Friday night.

-Night classes?

-You're still asleep, aren't you? Do you want me to write you a note so you remember this conversation?

-No. Are you going?

-Yes. Goodbye. There really is soup, or hamburger, too.

-Rosie, when you get back we'll talk. We will.

-Paulo, fine, baby. Good.

Finale of Introspection.

The soup was cream of mushroom with, I thought, a rather too-strong gravy. The hamburgers I prepared with cream cheese in the middle and, since I forgot the name of a burger so cooked, I created a new one: Paulo Burgers With Cream Cheese In Middle. I made the entire half

pound, expecting that Rosie might want one when she got back from classes. Around eight thirty Professor Litz rang and he was greatly alarmed to hear that I had been deathly ill with something for the past two days, and greatly relieved to hear that I would pull through, the dissertation was still a go, etcetera. I hung up the receiver, flipped a burger, and felt good. I had been through what I would call a mental test of courage and strength, which I would only refer to as my Quest, never my Odyssey, since the only distance I really traveled was up into Rockville, and, later, from the living-room couch to mid-floor. As I sat down with a glass of milk and the hamburgers it occurred to me that, if Rosie really wanted to, she could have left me *enchanted* hamburger and mushroom soup. I laughed good naturedly with myself over that one. One hamburger went down quick, the next a bit slower. The third I took out to the living room to eat while watching TV. I walked across the carpet to the couch, knowing full well, (I stress!) that it would not change to ocean under my foot, and further, that my dead ex was *not* watching the circular marks of my shoes crease the surface from the underside. This night was the best I had felt in ages. I even caught myself humming as I flicked through the stations. Somebody has docked, I told myself.

-Somebody would never dock, Somebody countered.

-He has, and happily so. Now he can be with Rosie, who has been an absolute gem to ignore all this bullshit.

-Maybe you forgot but Somebody drowned.

-And then he swam back up to the surface.

-Where he died again, of heat stroke.

-Bullshit.

-Bullshit you! If he was alive, awaiting his third and final death, he would crawl back upon his skiff, or, if the skiff was too busted up, he would make himself a new one and away he would sail.

-Somebody would see the people waving scarves at him from the dock, and he would change course immediately and go to them.

-Somebody is a loner. Somebody carries a great pain in his gut which he must keep secluded from the rest of man.

-Somebody has passed his test, and he can now sail home. Kick hell out of all the suitors, rejoin his wife-

-Fool, you fool, you. You must understand Somebody the Sailor, who sleeps under stars etcetera and sings a cappella etcetera his friends the gulls etcetera his name who the Golden etcetera in potato bug etcetera we have a decision to make.

Signature tune.

-Sorry I'm late. I saw the hamburgers, thanks.

-Did you eat them?

-Yes.

-How many?

-Two.

-You have to stay with me for a whole year. I ate three so I have to stay with you a year and a half.

-When my time's up I'll just hang around anyway.

-I'd bring you a beer, but I drank them all. That means I have to let my hair grow for. . . twelve years.

-We'll talk about that. I'm not so hot on the whole-

-Did you have anything to drink with your meal?

-Milk. What does that mean, baby?

-How many glasses?

-Tell me what it means first.

-It has something to do with sex, but I haven't figured out all the angles yet.

-I finished the jug.

-That'll cost you extra.

-Well splendid then.

-You're all scrunched up, little bug.

-Don't call me a bug, Paulo.

-It's just a metaphor, Rosie. It's just a way of speech.

- It's just a speech, Paulo, it's just a way of metaphor.

-I'll tell you what's been bugging me.

-Write it down and I'll look at it tomorrow.

-I'll write it to you. It will begin 'Dearest Rosie, I'-

-Don't write it to me, just write it.

Final Retrospective Moment in Defense of my Sanity

Her breathing, gentlemen, like a peaceful syncopation: oceans, winds, seasons conspire for a heavy sleep. Wakeful Paulo listens entranced, a child at the keyhole of the universe's mechanisms. Fearful Somebody has experienced two deaths, and we can only assume he is equipped with one more. Even so, it is time to step from his skiff onto Paulo's more comfortable and forgiving double bed. I council myself with the following insight:

Paulo, baby, we've always been overly dramatic. Six year old Paulo stays out in the cold with coat unbuttoned, wets his hair with mitten-fulls of snow and rubs nose red before opening the back door and stepping inside for inspection by mother. Sixteen year old Paulo

fails in numerous romantic involvements and drinks himself into self-serving stupor and talks loudly of suicide. Twenty six year old Paulo convinces self of his metaphorical existence in the visage of isolationistic sailor, experiences mythological figures, out-thinks conniving dead ex-girlfriend. (We must admit that we're getting more creative, at least.) And all at points, his drama reflects that of an actor, who certainly *seems* like Hamlet, but later that night discusses theater gossip, chews, smokes, sleeps with the representation of Gertrude, watches tv, and gives introspective interviews. Likewise, the six year old is aware of his self-sabotage, the sixteen year old that suicide is most certainly not an option, and the twenty-six is aware of his reality, glowing faintly over his left shoulder, a beacon to which he can return at any step. At some point, Somebody was bound to admit that he is only the latest of characters cooked up by metaphorical chef Paulo. Jury, if I were committed to asylum, I would drop all pretense and explain to the white-garbed minister that it was all a joke I played on myself, a sort of brain-medication, even, which kept me calm during some lean days. Only once did I manage to really scare myself, and then I promptly got my stupid ass off my skiff and back into my apartment. Still it nags at me, in alternating viscous cycles. Simply, I decided to drop out for a few days, imagine myself alone (Cue stirring music, conductor,) in order to bring some sort of escape from these streets, the racket of 702, fresh Kathleen's busy moldering, etcetera. Somebody sailed away, an unforgivable selfishness. I traveled that path to it's thorny end, and, finally falling asleep, was brought back to home shores by the ghostly Phoenicians. Thanks, Phoenicians, thanks, but you too are metaphorical nothings constructed of nothing, heated by fevered brows and borrowed from dusty lore.

We must, I feel, return once more to the fine and delicate signature tune which Rosie and I have silently constructed. At this point she sleeps still, one hand dropped off the bed to rest lightly on our floorboards. Soon, she will wake, stretch, and stumble to the bathroom. She will read these lines, transforming through anger, amusement, and pleasure. And then, after the turning of the final page, I expect our musical composition to begin

-Paulo, are you okay now?

-Fine, fine as rain.

-That's the first time I ever heard you use a cliché.

-I'm not as strong as I used to be, Rosie.

-Nonsense. What time is it? I'll make us breakfast.

-It's late, but we'll eat. Bread or toast with butter and something sweet.

-Rhyming again?

-I swear I didn't mean it.

-The bread is stale.

-Then toast it is.

-Have you been up all night?

-I have.

-Go to sleep, Paulo.

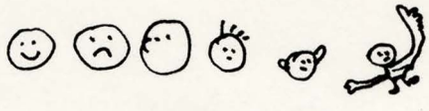
-I will, I will, and then on with the domestics. Painting things. Screwing screws. Conjugal enjoyments and the like.

-Listen to you. You're a changed man.

-A changed man, yes my jewel, a changed man.

* * *

following page: ***Andrew JM Stone***
"Régurgitation de la Refusé # 2"
ink wash



Read THIS and weep:

THIS IS IT * THIS is the way the world ends, not with a bang.... * THIS is not your father's Oldsmobile * THIS is the time to remember, for it will not last forever.... * Get THIS * THIS IS A RECORDING * THIStle down * THIS IS NOT THE ELM * THIS is the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius * The more you hate THIS, the more this will like you * THIS GOD WINTER * THIS fragile earth, our island home * We can't keep meeting like THIS * THIS is your life * THIS SUCKS * Read THIS to your Mammy * THIS is a mistake * THIS MEANS WAR * Take THIS job and shove it * DIG THIS * THIS chick is toast! * (Substitute any verb) THIS, pal! * You can get with THIS or you can get with that * Fuck THIS town, nothing's ever going down * THIS is the world we live in, these are the hands we're given * THIS IS NOT YOUR MOTHER'S TAMPON * Things don't get any better than THIS * THIS one goes to eleven * THIS one goes out to the one I love * THIS is not a love song * THIS could be the saddest dusk I've ever seen * THIS IS YOUR BRAIN--THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON DRUGS * I don't like the sound of THIS * THIS is sharp enough to cut paper. * THIS is the strangest life I've ever known * THIS is the crunchiest pickle I've ever hoid * THIS is the last worthless evening you'll ever spend * THIS is the first day of the last day of the last hour of the first fifty minutes of your life * THIS is crazy * Well you're screwy, Mr. Potter * WHAT'S A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS? * I don't think I'm going to like THIS * Et this, Brute * Hasta La THIS, Baby * Keep away from a runaround THIS, uh huh * Jimmy HendTHIS * CAN'T TOUCH THIS * THIS is a bad hair day * Nurse, THIS communion wafer is stuck to the roof of my mouth * THIS is the tale of the castaways * THIS was the best of times, THIS was the worst of times * Call me THIShmale * THIS reminds me of something * THIS doesn't look too good * I have to take a THIS * Is THIS a banana in your pocket? * THIS is too big to fit in that little hole * THIS old man * THIS IS ONLY A TEST * You know what you can do with THIS???!!! * T.anya H.ates I.cky S.ocks * To pluck THIS nosehair is to pluck a flower from the garden * Just say "THIS" to drugs * Waiter, what is THIS fly doing in my soup? * THIS is starchy * The monster at the end of THIS book * Put THIS in your pipe and smoke it * JUST DO THIS * What the hell is THIS? * THIS is Steve Brown's private diary * Beat THIS * Eat THIS & die * THIS smells bad * My Country 'tis of THIS * THIS is poorly translated from the Spanish * You know what THIS means? * THIS IS SOMETHING I DON'T WANT TO DO * THIS is hagamadadado * My kingdom for a THIS * THIS is the story of a lovely lady * BURN THIS * To THIS or not to THIS; THIS is the question * THIS is going to hurt me more that it's going to hurt you * THIS is not a bag of dead birds * THIS is a magazine * THIS is not recyclable * THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING * THIS is not a crucifixion, Miss Black * THIS is getting ridiculous * To Hell with THIS * THIS is my sis * THIS can't go on * ENOUGH OF THIS * So I guess THIS means goodbye....

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